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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/12/2016  
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: LEBANON: SALLOUKH PREDICTS CABINET APPROVAL OF  
RESOLUTION

REF: A. BEIRUT 2600

Classified By: Jeffrey D. Feltman, Ambassador. Reason: 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a meeting with Ambassador Feltman and poloff (notetaker) on August 12, Lebanese Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh, joined by three of his MFA staff, urged that the Israeli blockade be lifted as soon as possible, but brushed aside concerns that arms smuggling will resume without an effective verification mechanism at ports, airports, and the border. Salloukh, a Shi'ite who is closely allied to Speaker Nabih Berri, is also eager to shorten the timeframe between the LAF/UNIFIL-plus deployment and the IDF withdrawal in order to avoid a breakdown in the cessation of hostilities. In a brief aside with the Ambassador following the meeting, Salloukh said he anticipates the Cabinet will approve UNSCR 1701 during its session on the evening of August 12. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Expressing concern that Israeli has continued and even expanded its military action in Lebanon, including aerial operations, despite the August 11 passage of UNSCR 1701, Salloukh hoped that the next few days would see the situation on the ground stabilize. He urged that both parties take action to protect civilians in the interim period, which Salloukh hoped would be shortened to the extent possible.

¶3. (C) Salloukh argued for the reopening of ports and airports, and even land links to Syria, as soon as possible in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the hardest-hit areas. The Ambassador urged that the GOL must do more to convince the Israelis that the ports of entry will be effectively monitored to block arms smuggling. The Ambassador recommended that the GOL consider employing UNIFIL or a private security firm to help with this, and that these steps may be taken quietly.

¶4. (C) Salloukh at first tried the head-in-the-sand approach, arguing that, "there will be no more wars (in Lebanon), so arms will not be needed." Observing that this argument had not struck home, Salloukh then suggested the issue be finessed for the time being so as not to muddy the waters during Lebanese deliberations over the resolution. "We need to accept the resolution first. We shouldn't anticipate issues down the road. This needs time." The Ambassador again urged that the GOL take the initiative on the issue of monitoring points of entry.

15. (C) In a private chat with the Ambassador following the meeting, Salloukh asked whether the USG was "pleased with Berri" following the Speaker's August 11 meeting with A/S Welch and the Ambassador (reftel). Salloukh noted that the Speaker had worked very hard the night of August 11 in order to get Hizballah on board with the resolution, and that he believes Hizballah will approve the resolution during the Cabinet session.

COMMENT

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16. (C) This meeting came before Iranian FM Mottaki's speech in Yemen calling the resolution unacceptable, so we will wait to see if Salloukh's prediction of Hizballah approval still holds after this evening's session. As we have noted from many of our meetings over the past week, many Lebanese portray the Speaker, with some justice, as the glue holding together a Lebanese consensus on a way out of the conflict with Israel. Salloukh certainly hoped to build the Speaker up in our eyes.

17. (C) Unfortunately, Salloukh's waffling on the issue of monitoring of points of entry does not augur well on getting the ports and airports reopened quickly. However, we hope that Berri can agree to some arrangement which the Israelis find sufficient, and which he can get Hizballah to accept. In order to portray himself, not Hizballah, as the primary facilitator in the reconstruction of the South, Berri needs the ports and airports open. We should keep this in mind in urging the GOL to come up with an acceptable monitoring mechanism.

FELTMAN